

Act Like Baby, Treated Like Baby

WALLA WALLA, Wash. (AP) — Some Washington State Penitentiary inmates who misbehaved had to wear diapers, crawl on the floor and carry baby bottles. Others were chained and handcuffed to beds.

It was all part of Dr. William Hunter's system for modifying the behavior of inmates who had a history of violence and self-destruction. The program was praised by many penal specialists and it was condemned by many lawyers defending inmate clients.

"Probably the most effective rehabilitation program that may well exist in the prison system," said a Johns Hopkins University specialist. Said an attorney, "He beat people into submission."

The psychologist, relieved as director of the prison's mental health program June 2, said he feels he was sacrificed by politicians "who want to save their own throats." He is now a therapist, with two months to go to retirement at 67.

Hunter, in an interview, said his methods worked. They dealt with the "worst, most hopeless people in this state" on their own levels, he said.

"The makeup of the psychopath's personality is such that he does not comprehend the feeling he is trying to convey," Hunter said. "He is usually sensitive and insecure, but he acts callous and tough because he doesn't want anyone to know it."

"As long as we treat ignorance with punishment, we won't help the guy."

"If a grown man urinates in

his pants and acts like a baby, he isn't punished by being put in diapers because it doesn't embarrass him."

"The point is to get him to realize what playing the role of the baby is all the way. In fact, all this penitentiary is in a big baby-sitting operation."

Hunter said he treated more than 1,000 inmate-patients in his 12 years at the prison. And he said he could not recall one individual in his program who returned to prison after being paroled.

"In 18 months to two years of treatment I can change their behavior. Right now, I've got

one man who admits to eight different stabbings while in (prison). Here he's been nothing but a perfect gentleman."

But Harold Bradley, director of the state's adult corrections division, said, "We still have a basic commitment in this system to maintaining the dignity and sanctity of human beings."

Logos challenges to Hunter's methods were increasing. The practice of chaining patients was stopped by court order.

Hunter denied allegations that his attendants had acted as a goon squad, beating patients. Further, he said, none of his methods are as bad as

they sound.

"We had one man here who burned up his mattress the first night he was here," Hunter said in a separate interview. "I put him on the bed so he couldn't hurt himself or others and because I wanted him there so he would be forced to do nothing but think."

The inmate's feet were chained and his arms handcuffed. Hunter said patients thus restrained could still move their limbs.

After five days of "think time," the psychologist said, the patient decided to act like "a full-grown adult."



(AP Wirephoto)

INMATE CHAINED TO BED AT WASHINGTON STATE PENITENTIARY
Some Praise Dr. William Hunter's System, But He Was Removed